

"Communes" - "Citizen-soldiers" -

Two important contributions on the subject of "Communes" have come to hand since the "Round-up" on Communes was produced last week; both contain quotations and details which add considerably to the knowledge we possess on this subject and for this reason are quoted at some length below.

Orthodoxy of the Commune policy:

"You are confronted with a task never before encountered by the communists of the world, that is, you must, in the light of special conditions unknown to the European countries, apply the general communist theory and communist measures and realise that peasants are the principal masses and that it is not the capital but the survivals of the Middle Ages that is to be opposed."

This quotation from Lenin's report to the second congress of the Communist Parties organisations of nationalities of Eastern Russia was used by Chen Boda in an article in the new Chinese Communist Party fortnightly journal "Red Flag" (Hong Chi) on 16/7/58: "Under the Banner of Mao Tse-tung".

After explaining how Mao is able to examine and explain the characteristics of China without the least being bound by formalism Chen Boda adds that:

"The primary and outstanding contribution Comrade Mao Tse-tung made to the Democratic Revolution was his theory of building and developing revolutionary bases in the countryside as the main form of alliance between the working class and the peasantry under the leadership of the Communist Party in the political, military and economic fields, and of taking such bases as the starting points of revolution and nationwide victory..."

.. "Comrade Mao Tse-tung's great contribution consists not only in his creative formulation of the general line - building socialism more, faster, better and more economically by exerting utmost efforts and pressing ahead consistently - but also in his creative selection of several basic points of the general line: gradually carrying out technological revolution and cultural revolution simultaneously with the continued completion of the socialist revolution on the economic, political and ideological fronts; developing industry and agriculture simultaneously with priority given to the development of heavy industry; developing central industry and local industry and developing big enterprises and medium and small enterprises simultaneously under centralised leadership and over-all planning and in coordination. This is his main summation of the experience in our socialist construction. It is a general principle that runs through the socialist construction of our country. This general principle will resolve all problems. Thanks to this general line for socialist construction, the creativeness of the people and local and central departments is brought into full play. The general big leap forward of the productive forces since last winter has been taken under these conditions."

The logical development of Mao's thought has been the arousal of enthusiasm of the masses. Chen quotes Karl Marx:

"Theory, once it has a grip on the masses, is instantly transformed into a material force".
and goes on to say that this is strikingly borne out by the present situation of big leap forward in China.

"Once Comrade Mao Tse-tung's thought has a grip on the masses, or, conversely, once it has been grasped by the masses, it becomes a weapon of the masses to open the road to the development of productive forces."

Chen Boda in Chen

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Once again Chen refers back to the Communist Manifesto:

"Karl Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto listed the last two of the ten measures to be taken after the realization of the proletarian dictatorship as follows: 'combine agriculture and industry and facilitate the gradual elimination of distinction between town and country'; 'combine education and material production'. The general line for socialist construction and the basic points contained therein as proposed by Comrade Mao Tse-tung and adopted by the second session of the 8th National Congress of our Party are clarifying the conditions and concrete forms for realizing these two measures. Comrade Mao Tse-tung said we should gradually and systematically organize 'industry, agriculture, commerce, education and soldiers' (people's armed forces) into a big commune, the way to form basic units of society. In this commune, industry, agriculture and commerce will serve the material life of the people, culture and education will reflect the spiritual life of the people, and the people's armed forces will protect such material life and spiritual life - these people's armed forces are absolutely necessary pending the complete elimination of exploitation of man by man in the world. This conception of the commune is a conclusion drawn by Comrade Mao Tse-tung from real life.

Having developed his theme from the contents of the Communist Manifesto, Chen Po-ta proceeds to develop the significance of the Mao Tse-tung banner which, combining the Chinese Communists and the people, integrates the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution and creatively develops Marxism-Leninism under the conditions of China and is therefore the banner of victory of the Chinese People's revolution and socialist construction and "guided by this great red banner the Chinese people will in the not distant future enter on the great communist society.

So much for Chen Po-ta's development of the theme of the orthodoxy of the policy now being implemented in China.

Development of Communes

The next stage was reached in the following issue of "Red Flag" which contained an article on the rapid development of communes throughout China. It described the spread of communes as "as rapid as a new irresistible tide of mass movement on a nation-wide scale. Not only some areas had made spectacular progress others had not been quite so quick but great preparations are already in hand. One reason for the rapidity of this movement is the authorities are spurring the peasants to do so. The existing people's communes have shown even greater superiority over the farm cooperatives, in spurring the initiative of the masses in production, raising the rate of utilization of labour power and labour productivity, enlarging productive capital construction, accelerating the cultural and technical revolutions and in promoting public welfare." In other words, communes provide the Central People's Government with a correct with which to encourage the masses to progress to the stage of growing their own communes.

The author goes on to say that this is the logical trend of development of the present situation.

First of the foundations of the new society is to be laid on the basis of "the all-round and continuous leap forward in China's agricultural production and the constantly growing political consciousness of the 500 million peasants."

At the same time "small and medium industrial enterprises are being rapidly developed in the countryside so as to develop agricultural production further, to promote the integration of industry and agriculture and to raise the standard of living of the rural population."

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The changes in the countryside have enabled the peasants to see that "the original organisational form of the agricultural producers' cooperative, which is relatively small in scale and has relatively few fields of operation, can no longer meet the requirements of the development of production forces" asserts the article. It adds rather arbitrarily "Besides, for the farm cooperatives to operate agriculture alone, has become entirely backward. The farm cooperative not only has to become a unit for the joint management of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, side-lines, and fisheries at one and the same time, but it also has to become a unified organisational unit where industry, agriculture, trade, education and military affairs merge into one. What is more, it adds" the merger of the township people's council and the farm cooperative facilitates unified leadership and the rapid expansion of the social productive forces."

The Advantages of Communes:

(a) Maximum use of labour power:

"To make full use of labour power, to enable women to play their full part in field work and to ensure that there is no waste of the labour time to men and women, the farm cooperatives must not only be organisers of production, but also organisers of the way of life, not only to they have to collectivise labour further, but also to organise the collective way of life. On the basis of this urgent need, public canteens, nurseries, kindergartens, tailoring teams, etcetera, are being formed in large numbers."

(b) Changed relations of production:

"The people's communes in many places have wiped out certain last vestiges of private ownership of the means of production (owing to the overgrowing need to work collectively and the extension of public canteen service to all members, it becomes both impossible and unnecessary for them to keep small personal plots of land and breed their own pigs). And they have gone beyond the pattern of collective ownership in certain respects. Moreover, from such developments as the supply system of grain within the commune, people can easily see the budding sprouts of communism."

(c) Transformation of collective ownership to ownership by whole people:

"The transition from collective ownership to ownership by the whole people is a process which may be fairly quick in one place and slower in another."

(d) Elimination of disparities:

"... the differences between workers and peasants, between town and country, as well as between mental work and manual work - the remnants of the old society that cannot but be retained during the socialist period - will gradually disappear; the remnants of unequal bourgeois rights which reflect these differences will also gradually disappear. Then the function of the State will only be to deal with aggression from external enemies and will not operate internally. By that time our country will enter a new era, from the socialist era based on the principle of 'from each according to his ability and to each according to his work' to the Communist era based on the principles of 'from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs'."

(e) Acceleration of production and of transition to communism:

"The present people's commune offers our country a good form of organisation to accelerate socialist construction and the transition to communism. It will not only be the primary unit of our society at the present stage but will grow and become the primary unit of the future communist society."

Organisation of communes to follow military-type lines.

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Organisation of Communists to follow military-type lines:

The present trend in the countryside is being pursued under the slogans "get organised along military lines, do things the way battle duties are carried out and live collective lives". The significance of this is explained in the Red Flag article of 31/8 as follows:

"Get organised along military lines" of course does not mean that they are really organised into military barracks.... It simply means that the swift expansion of agriculture demands that they should greatly strengthen their organisation, act more quickly and with greater discipline and efficiency, so that, like factory workers and army men, they can be deployed with greater freedom and on a large scale.

"That is why they have come to the conclusion that they should organise along military lines. The peasant leaders who have put forward these slogans don't know perhaps that Marx and Engels in the 'Communist Manifesto' had long ago advanced a programme for the 'establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture'. But they, and the broad masses of the peasants who have gone through the long years of the armed struggles of the people's revolution, know perfectly well that military lines are nothing to be feared. On the contrary, it is only natural to them that the whole population should be citizen-soldiers, ready to cope with the imperialist aggressors and their lackeys. Although the organisation of agricultural labour along military lines at present is for waging battles against nature, and not human enemies, it is none the less not difficult to transform one kind of struggle into another.

"While no external enemies attack us, the people's communes, in which the workers, peasants, traders, students and militiamen are merged into one, aim to storm the fortresses of nature and to march to the happy future of industrialisation, urbanisation and Communism in the countryside. If and when external enemies dare to attack us, then the entire armed population will be mobilised to wipe out the enemies resolutely, thoroughly and completely".

"To organise along military lines, to do things the way battle duties are carried out, and to live collective lives, certainly does not mean that the intensity of labour should be infinitely stretched. As the Central Committee of the Party has pointed out, we should do our work rhythmically and combine hard battle with necessary rest and regrouping. Besides, discipline and centralisation in work must be built on the voluntary and democratic basis of the masses".

No Risk of "Commandism" involved:

"In our opinion, for the people's communes to be organised along military lines and to arm the entire population, is a completely different matter from commandism". The article pointed out that commandism can occur anywhere and at any time but with the communes "commandism can be avoided and the highest degree of democracy can be realized". It went on: "Actually, as the productivity of labour is being constantly raised, as the mechanisation and electrification of farm work is more and more developed, as there is a constantly increasing amount of social products and the people's educational level is further raised, labour time will be gradually shortened, the intensity of labour will be gradually reduced and in this way the possibilities of overcoming commandism become greater and greater".

Mental Ferment and debates essential

"The very establishment and development of the people's communes must go through the process of thorough mental ferment among the masses. Only through a full airing of views and debates, only when the people in a locality are willing to go in for it entirely of their own accord, should the agricultural producers' cooperatives be transformed into people's communes.

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Reports of Progress made in establishing Communes:

The rapidity with which the formation of communes is spreading throughout China can be judged by the rate at which progress is being made in Honan.

On 23/8/58 Peking radio reported that the formation of people's communes has, in the main, been completed in Honan which now has 993; another 494 are in the process of establishment. Those already formed have an average of 6,837 households each; 99.8% of the total peasant households in the province have joined. In the cities and towns, using factories, enterprises, schools, Government agencies, and streets as units, 173 people's communes have been formed. The programme for the establishment of communes has been realised in the cities of Chinotso, Changchow, Kaifeng, Shengchiu and Loyang.

The Peking report said that those concerned in the Province consider that the system of people's communes is the best basic organisation system for the gradual transition from socialism to communism and its advantages over ordinary agricultural cooperatives were listed as:

- (1) It can concentrate more manpower, increase work efficiency, and provide more women workers. The province now has over 500,000 kindergartens, creches and baby-care teams, with more than 6 million children, or 62.71% of the province's children up to 6 years, in their care. The province also has organised 310,000 public mess halls, 91,000 flour mills and 16,000 distilleries. Statistics compiled in 7 special districts show that 6.97 million women are available for work.
- (2) It can increase public reserves, make better use of capital, speed up basic construction projects serving production, and accelerate the mechanisation programme.
- (3) It can make better use of land.
- (4) It is more capable of undertaking large-scale basic construction projects and in improving techniques.
- (5) It can raise the people's material and cultural life more quickly. In general all the communes in the province now have "Red and expert" colleges. Some communes have set up "cooperative" or public-fund medical services.
- (6) It is the best form of organisation for the realisation of the general line for socialist construction because it can handle both industry and agriculture, and all sizes of projects, including heavy and light industries.
- (7) It is more efficient in eradicating all old thinking and customs, such as individualism and capitalism. Party committees have played a leading role in the formation of communes. (Peking 23/8/58).

Contributions made by sectors of the community:

(a) Militia: Through militia organisations a sound foundation has been laid for the people's communes in which workers, peasants, students and army men are merged together. This is the Hefei radio account of 31/8 of an item in the Anhwei Daily. The same report referred to the excellent example set by the militia in the village of Sanken in Seitung County where each militiaman is holding a gun in one hand and a plough in the other and is at the same time helping in production, protecting installations, maintaining social order and training national defence reserves.

(b) Women: The National Women's Federation in China has sponsored an exhibition in Peking on the role of women in national construction which shows that 90% of the women in the rural areas have joined production. In many places they have become an important force in livestock farming, afforestation and field work. They are also engaged in water conservancy construction (40% of the labour force), as well as in factories and workshops. (NCNA 25/8)

9/9/58